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ABSTRACT

Writings about educational systems can be broken into four approaches (dimensions), by which authors limit and create the conceptual schemes on which they base their work. Original work may be improved by an author's attending to the specific writing requirements of each dimension of educational composition. In the first dimension, papers are limited by their educational scope: by geography, by educational functions and components such as enrollment or students' political activity, or by philosophy and research methodology (particularly prevalent in comparative education). A second dimension of educational models is their purpose, which may be descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, schematic, or persuasive. Purely descriptive pieces are rarely published, and authors who use explanatory/evaluative or evaluative/persuasive purposes have a better chance for publication. The third dimension may form an educational model around social science theories, such as those of social conflict, social structures, or equilibrium paradigms. The last dimension concentrates on the interactions of education with individuals and society and is particularly common in writing on international education, which usually emphasizes the relationship of education and society. Frequently, authors propose causal relationships involving several levels of educational interaction. (JW)

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A FRAMEWORK FOR COMPARING WRITINGS ABOUT EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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The central assumption on which this paper is founded is that every piece of writing about educational phenomena is organized according to a model the author has in mind. The term model, in the sense it is used here, is a conception that includes: (1) the identification of aspects of the phenomenon that the writer believes are significant, (2) a selection of information to illustrate or support statements about the aspects, and (3) a proposal of how the aspects are related to each other. Such a model is the framework which determines the sort of material to be included in an article or book about a single education system or about two or more systems that are being compared.

Our discussion of such matters is based as well on several subsidiary assumptions. First, writers describing educational phenomena may either consciously design the models they employ or else may only sense the models intuitively without recognizing their characteristics. And even writers who are clearly aware of the frameworks they use may not specify for their readers the nature of these conceptual schemes. Instead, they leave the reader to discover for herself the anatomy of the writers' plans.

With these assumptions set forth, I now propose four dimensions or categories which form a framework I have found useful not only for analyzing the models underlying others' works, but also for creating an array of models from which an author may choose as he or she prepares to write about educational phenomena. These dimensions are not suggested as the only good ones to use in categorizing educational writings, but only as four of the good ones. The process of describing the dimensions enables us also to generate criteria for judging the adequacy of authors' models and for assessing how skillfully authors have applied the models in their writing.

The following explanation of each dimension involves (1) labeling the dimension, (2) defining and describing it, (3) citing examples of the dimension as it has appeared in different authors' works (for sake of convenience, all examples are from issues of the Comparative Education Review in recent years with the journal-issue identified in parentheses by month and year), and (4) suggesting criteria to apply in assessing how adequately an author has treated that dimension.

Dimension 1: The Educational Scope. No model treats all educational phenomena everywhere. Instead, the scope of most models is limited in at least two important ways —in the geographical area it encompasses and in the educational functions or components it treats. A book on education may be limited geographically to a given region of the world, such as East Africa, or to a single nation, to a given province within a nation, or to a single school.

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In terms of educational functions or components, the writing may encompass several aspects (student enrollment, administration, curriculum development, and personnel supply) or it may treat only one function or component (school mapping or student political activity). The titles of articles and books often reflect both factors, geographical and component. Examples of articles treating one nation are: Early Childhood Education in China (Feb 1982), A 19th-Century French Proposal to Use School Vouchers (Feb 1982), School-Based Curriculum Development in Britain (Feb 1982). Examples of articles encompassing more than one nation or region are: The School Education of Girls --An International Comparative Study, (Feb 1982), Open Education in Three Societies, Third World Education Costs (Oct 1982).

There is an exception to the foregoing comments about geographical and educational-component limitations. That is, a smaller group of writings treat philosophical perspectives or research methodology in comparative education. In such cases the scope is not defined geographically, but rather in terms of investigative viewpoints. Examples of such articles are: Social and Educational Change: Conceptual Frameworks (Oct 1977), Critical Ethnography in the Study of Comparative Education (Feb 1982), and Currents Left and Right: Ideology in Comparative Education (Feb 1983).

With the first dimension thus identified, we now consider criteria for appraising how adequately authors have treated this aspect in their writings. I would propose that authors' writings are better when they (A) inform the reader precisely of the geographical, the educational-component, and the philosophical or investigative realm on which their model centers, (B) do not stray out of the realm, and (C) investigate the realm as completely as the definition of it requires.

Dimension 2: The Purpose of a Model. Models can be designed to fulfill one or more of at least five purposes. In regard to the selected educational component or scope, the model can be designed to: (2.1) to describe it, (2.2) to explain it, (2.3) to assess it, (2.4) to plan it, or (2.5) to propagandize it.

2.1 A descriptive model is intended to answer the question: "What are the characteristics of the education system at a particular time?" Or an historical cast can be lent to the work if the question is changed to: "What are the characteristics of the educational system at two or more time periods?" or "How have the characteristics changed over time?" When such a description covers a sequence of historical steps, it becomes a chronicle. Furthermore, a description can be rendered comparative in a cross-system sense if the question becomes: "How are the characteristics of one education system similar to and different from the same characteristics of another?" But whatever the time and space encompassed by the scheme, a strictly descriptive model is designed only to tell how things appear; it does not attempt to explain why they are that way.

2.2 An explanatory model is intended to answer questions of cause and effect, questions of "why." There are various forms in which the issue may be stated, such as "Why is the system the way it is today?" or "What are the factors that have caused the system's characteristics to assume their present condition, and how have these factors interacted to bring about such a result?" It should be apparent that explanatory models also include descriptions of the education system, so that such models are descriptive plus explanatory. The author's particular viewpoint toward explanation —that is, her theory of cause— helps her identify which things need to be described in order to make clear the case of causality she is seeking to build.

2.3 An assessment or evaluation model is intended to show how adequately an aspect of an educational system meets criteria of desirability or goodness, with the central question being "How well has the education system achieved the standards set for it?" or "Where does the system stand in terms of the criteria of quality or quantity we are using?" Such a model implies three chief components: (A) a statement of criteria of desirability (often to include a rationale to support the selection of such criteria), (B) a description of the status of the education system in the realms on which the criteria focus, and (C) a conclusion about how closely the status described under (B) matches the standards defined under (A). Oftentimes an author will add an explanatory component to the assessment model by proposing causal factors that account for why the system's status has or has not fulfilled the criteria of desirability.

2.4 The function of a planning model is to propose a means of achieving some educational goal: "What steps can be taken to effect the changes we hope to bring about?" Planning models typically include components of all three types discussed above. They contain descriptions of the education system in both its present state and in its envisaged future state. They involve an explanation of what factors have apparently caused the system to assume its present state and what changes in such factors can cause the system to attain its hoped-for state. And they include an explicit or implicit model of how the system's present status is to be assessed as well as a scheme for evaluating progress toward the desired future status. Planning schemes are sometimes called development models. When a plan concerns only the final developmental step of distributing an innovation to a broader audience of users, it may be called a dissemination model.

2.5 A propagandistic model is designed to convince readers of the desirability or undesirability of an educational plan, policy, or practice. The word propaganize is not intended here in a pejorative sense, that is, to imply actions that are underhanded or that will damage the welfare of some group. Rather, propagandize simply means that the author's purpose is to influence people to adopt the attitude toward the education system that the author is advocating. Propagandistic models incorporate aspects of all or most of the other models discussed above. All propagandistic frameworks

involve description and assessment, and most involve explanation, either explicit or implied.

Let us now consider examples of different purposes as reflected in articles from the October 1978 Comparative Education Review. "Ideology, Reproduction, and Educational Reform" is primarily an assessment model, in that the author evaluates different ways of explaining selected educational phenomena. "Evaluation as Scientific Management" is a propagandistic model, with a considerable amount of assessment used to support the author's dim view of systems analysis and his final proposal that "evaluation policy in a large pluralistic society like the United States should use various approaches to evaluation and should rely on none exclusively" (p. 401). The same basic propagandistic model (an evaluation of various alternatives in support of the author's advocating a given educational practice) is found in "Rationales for Bilingual Educational Reforms." A dual purpose underlies "The Dilemma of Comprehensive Secondary School Reforms in Western Europe," in which the author proposes an explanatory model as an "interpretive framework" for assessing the role of comprehensive secondary school reforms (p.436).

One lesson an author may derive by inspecting such a journal as the Comparative Education Review from the viewpoint of types of models is that an article based on an exclusively descriptive model has little if any chance of being published. Such an inspection suggests, as well, that authors who employ explanatory/assessment and assessment/propagandistic models have a good chance to be published, given that the geographical-educational scope of their piece is attractive to the editors and that the author's argument is presented lucidly.

Now to the matter of criteria for judging how well an author's model cares for Dimension 2. I would suggest that an author's works are better if they: (A) tell the reader explicitly the purpose the model is intended to pursue, (B) adhere faithfully to the purpose, without deviation, throughout the document, (C) carry the description through to completion, and (D) include enough detail to convince the reader of the validity of the author's argument (explanatory, assessment, and progapandistic models) or permit the reader to replicate the methodology in a similar situation (descriptive, explanatory, assessment, and planning models). In short, the author delineates the path, does not stray from it, and continues to the end in sufficient detail.

Dimension 3: Social-Science-Discipline Perspective. Frequently an explanatory model depends heavily on a theory of causation that derives from a particular social-science discipline, in that the model draws concepts, assumptions, generalizations, or methodology from an existing theory. The fact that such is the case in a given piece of writing either may be stated outright by the author or may only be reflected in the way he discusses causes. In some cases the author does not adopt someone else's

theory but devises one of his own, or at least creates his own variation of someone else's theme.

Examples of authors adopting existing social-science theories to explain educational phenomena are found in such CER articles as Reforming Education for Workers (social-conflict model, Oct 1978), Rationales for Bilingual Educational Reforms (equilibrium paradigm and social-conflict theory, Oct 1978), and Social Structure and Teacher Effects on Academic Achievement (technological and deficit theories compared to social-structure theory, Feb 1983).

In respect to criteria related to this dimension, I would propose that an explanatory model is better if the author: (A) identifies for the reader the theory or theories from which key concepts in the article have been drawn, (B) describes any changes the author has made in an adopted theory for purposes of the present application (such as accepting only parts of the theory or merging concepts from two theories), (C) faithfully carries through all of the explanatory steps implied by the theory, including sufficient detail to satisfy the reader's desire for specificity, and (D) points out any limitations or weaknesses of the theory that have been discovered when applying it to the educational phenomenon under study.

An example of a book reviewer's criticizing an author for failing to fulfill criterion (C) above is Weeks' comment about a volume on Pacific-island education: "role theory is asserted but never utilized, there being no evidence and no documentation" (Feb 1982 p.131). Likewise, in a review of a book on the education of girls in 62 nations, Kelly lauds the author's product generally, but adds: "One would have hoped for a more thoroughgoing explanation of the causes of female undereducation" (Feb 1982 p.128).

Dimension 4: Interaction of Education, Individuals, and Society. While some writings about education center their attention entirely on the internal operation of the school system, a large proportion of works in international education include —or indeed, emphasize— interactions between education systems and people, with the people more often viewed collectively (society) than individually. The following examples illustrate journal articles which center on (1) educational influences on (1.1) society and on (1.2) individuals, (2) societal influences on education, (3) indviduals' influences on education, and (4) some combination of two or more of the foregoing varieties of influence.

(1.1) Educational influences on society Cummings describes the social-leveling effect of schooling (Egalitariansim and Japanese Education, Feb 1982). Sidel proposes that preschool experience in China is conceived to be an effective instrument for molding children's social values, attitudes, and emotions (Early Childhood Education in China, Feb 1982). Apple proposes that a school's curriculum contents affect social

inequalities (Ideology and Educational Reform, Oct 1978). Irizarry contends that certain varieties of advanced schooling in developing nations contribute to wasteful unemployment (Overeducation and Unemployment, Oct 1980). Young identifies the seeds of migration as arising from propaganda in school lessons about life beyond one's community Intimate Allies Migration: Education and Propaganda in a Philippine Village, June 1982).

(1.2) Educational influences on individuals Studies of how education affects the lives of individuals sometimes appear in the form of case studies or biographies, but more often they appear as descriptions of the kind of influence that touches the lives of many individuals so that the sum of such influence becomes a force in society. Such is the case in the following two examples.

Yogev's analysis of the Costa Rican National You h Movement (Modernity and Aspirations: Youth Organizations in the Third World, Oct 1980) proposes that "Such organizations are backed by the state and are officially aimed at a greater involvement of youth in national development. They therefore emphasize the inculcation of modern values and norms of behavior" and "It is evident that the emphasis of the movement on individual modernity increases the status aspirations of its members" (pp.353, 370).

Hermalin, Seltzer, and Lin have contended that the number of children in a family in developing societies affects how high in the schooling hierarchy an individual is likely to progress, particularly how high a female will advance. "As the level of development [of a society] increases, greater value is attached to education as a vehicle for social mobility and parents begin to consider it as an alternative to other consumption items. One observable effect of this heightened demand for education is that schooling is seen as a good competing with number of children, and [larger] family size begins to have a negative effect on individuals' educational attainment" (Transitions in the Effect of Family Size on Female Attainemnt: The Case of Taiwan, pp.269-270).

(2) Societal Effects on Education In journals like the Comparative Education Review, more frequent than articles about the influence of education on society are articles about the effect of societal factors on schools. The following are examples of such studies.

Heyneman and Loxley (The Distribution of Primary School Quality within High- and Low-Income Countries, Feb 1983) inspected the economic strength and the spread of basic schooling in 29 nations and concluded that "Countries with a scarcity of resources —in transportation, administration, and management— could be expected to perform worse in distributing any resource, especially one of such complexity as school quality; but this does not seem to occur. Among the low-income countries, many have managed the distribtion of school resources in a fashion that is every bit as equal as countries with higher levels of income, an abundance of training, and a plethora of facilities to assist in educational

management" (pp. 117-118).

Smith and Cheun (Social Origins and Sex-differential Schooling in the Philippines, Feb 1981) studied the ways several social variables —father's education, child's sex, social-class level, urban/rural location— affect the pattern of enrollment in schools at different levels on the educational ladder.

Ram (Public Subsidization of Schooling and Inequality of Educational Access, Feb 1982) compared alternative methods of estimating what effect financial subsidies exert on who enters higher-education institutions in less-developed and more-developed nations.

Male (Multicultural Education and Education Policy: The British Experience, Oct 1980) investigated the growing influence on the curricula of British schools brought about by the nation's increasing diversity of ethnic groups and their indigenous cultures.

(3) Individuals' Influence on Schools Articles identifying the effect that individuals exert on educational policies and practices are rare in such journals as the Comparative Education Review. When they do appear, they usually take the form of a memorial, that is, a brief review of the life of an individual who has recently died after having made significant contributions to the field of comparative education, particularly to the work of the Comparative and International Education Society. An example is Nash's article entitled A Humanistic Gift from Europe: Robert Ulrich's Contribution to Comparative Education (June/Oct 1977).

The role of individuals is also described in writings that survey the developmental history of comparative education, such as the depiction of the contributions of Kandel, Anderson, Foster, Adams, and Beredy in Intellectual and Ideological Perspectives in Comparative Education: An Interpretation (June/Oct 1977). Articles about the relationship of "great national leaders" and education —such as of Mao Tse Tung, Kim Il Sung, or Fidel Castro— appear in publications emenating from these leaders' nations and occasionally in political-science, area-studies, and certain English-language educational journals, but almost never in ones like the Review.

(4) More Than One Sort of Interaction of Education, Individuals, and Society Frequently the causal relationships proposed by an author involve several of the foregoing varieties. In fact, numbers of the articles used as examples above give minor attention to factors other than the principal variable featured as the main issue in the examples. For instance, in Apple's proposal that curricular factors influence social inequalities, he recognized as well that social inequalities also influence the curriculum (Oct 1978). Likewise, Hawkins identified societal influences on alternative educational forms, and vice versa, in Family Planning Education and Health Care Delivery in the People's Republic of China (June 1976).

Finally, we consider criteria that may serve in appraising how well an author has dealt with this fourth dimension. I propose that a work is most effective if it: (1) explicitly alerts the reader early in the article or book to the sorts of interactions the author intends to treat, (2) explains by clear steps the rationale and the evidence in support of the proposed interactions, and (3) at the close of the work summarizes the chief findings about the interactions, their limitations, and further aspects of the issue that may warrant future investigation.